

## Town of Blacksburg Department of Public Works Case Study

With a need for detailed reporting, the Department of Public Works in the Town of Blacksburg needed a robust telematics solution that could provide reliable, real-time data about every aspect of the fleet's operations: They found it in the Geotab Public Works solution.

### The Challenge: Data accuracy

For many fleets today, data is the lifeblood of an efficient operation. But for the Town of Blacksburg, Va., reliable data was sometimes hard to come by.

John O'Shea, Safety and Special Projects Manager for the Town of Blacksburg Department of Public Works (DPW), notes that because of Blacksburg's rural location, connectivity can be spotty. This affected his ability to gather data from the fleet's previous telematics systems. "We had problems with signal consistency and transmission uptime," he explains. Further complicating matters, the town's previous telematics providers were unwilling to use a cellular carrier that offered better connectivity, compounding the team's frustrations and inability to get data.

But that was just the beginning. O'Shea explains, reporting was less-than comprehensive, "During snow events, we didn't have the technology to show us how much salt was being spread onto our roadways. We could track our vehicles, which was nice, but we wanted more." The Department of Public Works needed a flexible and robust telematics solution to meet its needs.



# Town of Blacksburg – Department of Public Works

blacksburg.gov

## Industry:

Government/Public Works

## Based in:

Blacksburg, VA

## Types of Vehicles:

Single axle dump trucks, pickups, automobiles

## Fleet size:

~400 vehicles

## The Solution: Actionable insights

The Town of Blacksburg was invited to take part in a public works pilot study involving Geotab's IOX Winter Gateway. It was that pilot that convinced the Town of Blacksburg that Geotab ticked all of the boxes on its "wanted" list. "The pilot study went very well for us, proving Geotab could deliver what we needed," O'Shea says.

One of the reasons the pilot was successful was that Geotab was flexible about the cellular carrier that could be used, allowing the town to use the carrier that had the best, most consistent coverage as opposed to the one they needed to use in the past. The result: consistent connectivity uptime and the kind of transparency and reporting capabilities they were looking for.

It's been a year since the Town of Blacksburg implemented the Geotab Public Works solution on 45 of its dump trucks and pickups. The solution has specialized reporting and IOX add-ons for winter operations. In addition to its dump trucks and pickups, the town also has two electric vehicles (EVs) equipped with the Geotab solution. O'Shea adds that the interface is particularly easy to use. "I look at the dashboard more on my iPad than I do on the desktop," he says.

## Benefits of the Geotab solution



Consistent connectivity



Automated, customized reporting



Vehicle and asset tracking



IOX capabilities



## The Results: Benefitting from transparency

Geotab has given the Department of Public Works a different perspective on their reporting. They've moved from assumption-based to data-driven decision making. For instance, in the past the DPW team had a geofence surrounding their salt shed. The assumption was that any time a plow went through the geofence, they were loading more salt. From there, they would guess how much salt was being loaded into the trucks and would even have team members physically follow trucks to confirm their assumptions about how much salt was being spread onto roads.

With data from Geotab, the management team can now make informed decisions based on real-time data that shows how much salt is being used, and how it's being spread onto roadways during a snow event. "We compared the numbers this past season with previous winters and have seen significant savings in terms of materials," explains O'Shea.


### Addressing financial challenges

Having access to real-time data is benefitting the fleet and the Town of Blacksburg, particularly during the challenges presented by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. "We've had quite a budget shortfall because of COVID-19. Blacksburg is a college town and it's lost a big part of its tax base without the students," explains O'Shea. "For the fleet, some of the hits are delaying purchasing vehicles."

But this is where the ready access of data comes to play. "It's very easy to pull up the data and get the full total cost of ownership picture on a vehicle," explains O'Shea. This allows the town stakeholders to determine where changes – such as a new vehicle – are necessary or where they can hold the line.

### First-class customer service

Customer service from Geotab has been a big benefit to the entire department. "We get instant replies to our customer service questions," says O'Shea. "Everyone knows what they're talking about."



*"This is the first time I've ever worked with a company as knowledgeable and helpful as the team at Geotab. No matter who I speak to, or what issues I may come across, the entire team is ready to help at any time. It's a relationship I truly look forward to continuing for many years into the future."*

*— John O'Shea, Safety and Special Projects  
Manager for the Town of Blacksburg –  
Department of Public Works*

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